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SUBJECT: USDP EDELMAN'S CONSULTATIONS IN PARIS, OCTOBER 16

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary. On October 16, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP) Eric Edelman met with GOF officials Michel Miraillet, Director of Strategic Affairs at the Defense Ministry, and Philippe Errera, Strategic Affairs Advisor to Foreign Minister Kouchner. They agreed on the importance of counternarcotics cooperation in Afghanistan, and constructively engaging Pakistan. Concurring on the need to maintain pressure on Syria, USDP Edelman and Miraillet also exchanged views on Iraq, piracy, and Iran. Finally, they agreed to meet in a more formal format in November in Washington, institutionalizing exchanges that the next U.S. administration can then continue. In a brief discussion of Russia/Georgia, MFA Russia expert Roland Galharague commented on Sarkozy's proposal for an OSCE Summit by the end of 2009 and expressed a desire for planning to be endorsed at the December 2008 Ministerial. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (C) USDP Edelman and Miraillet agreed on the importance of intensifying counternarcotics operations, including increasing guidance to troops on interdiction missions, keeping an Afghan face on counternarcotics operations, and maintaining pressure on Afghan President Karzai to confront drug traffickers. Miraillet expressed doubt that Karzai will confront drug traffickers, saying the Afghan President is preoccupied with his own political career. Errera and Miraillet also expressed concern about reconciliation noting in particular recent leaks about Saudi mediation. Edelman said some Afghan government officials are serious about reconciliation. He and Errera agreed that new Interior Minister Atmar is a promising leader.

¶3. (C) Miraillet noted that President Sarkozy's top military advisor, Admiral Guillaud, recently traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and delivered Afghan National Director of Security Saleh an "extremely tough" message from President Sarkozy about the need for intelligence sharing. Errera mentioned Kouchner's disappointment with the lackluster EU POL mission and France's efforts to increase support during its EU presidency. Errera also assured Edelman that Kouchner's initiative to convene an informal neighbors meeting is to be undertaken in full transparency with the UK and U.S.

PAKISTAN

¶4. (C) Miraillet noted that Pakistan's Army Chief General Kayani told Admiral Guillaud that the U.S. had delivered a very blunt message about containing ISI activity. However,

all agreed the message may not bear results. Edelman commented that there has been some Pakistani counterinsurgency activity on the frontier, but no diminution of insurgent activity, and that while the U.S. is training the Frontier Corps, the training is nowhere near the border, at the Pakistani government's insistence.

15. (C) Miraillet asked whether the U.S. was concerned about technology transfer in the sale of F-16s to Pakistan. He cited an incident regarding French missile sales to Pakistan in which Chinese copies appeared on the market shortly thereafter. Edelman said no specific reason for concern has arisen thus far. He noted that the U.S. Congress was seriously scrutinizing weapons sales to Pakistan. Miraillet's regional adviser Isabelle Saint-Mezard said that despite keeping a distance from the West regarding Pakistan policies, the French believe China may nonetheless exert pressure on Islamabad from behind the scenes.

GEORGIA

16. (C) MFA A/S for Continental Europe Roland Galharague described Sarkozy's unexpected initiative to hold an OSCE summit on security (at Evian, October 15) as a means to counter and shape Russian calls for a new European security architecture. Describing Medvedev's initiative as a throwback to the Soviet era, Galharague said Sarkozy wanted to put it in a context where other issues (human rights, etc.) would be discussed and where there would be no question of changing competencies of existing security arrangements in NATO and elsewhere. French thinking also

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takes account of the nature of Russia's intervention in Georgia, which France now believes looks more and more like a one-time event. Displaying a willingness to work with those in Russia who share that view could help strengthen their hand, Galharague concluded by noting that France hopes the December 2008 OSCE ministerial will endorse Sarkozy's idea - for a summit 12 months hence.

LEBANON AND SYRIA

17. (C) Edelman noted recent DoD exchanges with Lebanese counterparts, in addition to President Sleiman's "good" visit to Washington and a trip to Beirut by Gen. Petraeus. Miraillet asked whether we tracked our contributions to the LAF; Edelman responded that our assistance is in-kind and that we have not uncovered serious problems, but that we track sensitive items. Miraillet said Syrian military movements on Lebanon's northern border are "not really" of concern, partly because Syrian equipment is in very bad shape. He said President Sarkozy delivered a "very blunt" message to the Syrians, in front of the Qataris. He also said the establishment by Syria of diplomatic relations with Lebanon was due to international pressure and should not be taken for granted. Both Edelman and Miraillet agreed on the need to keep scrutiny and pressure on the Syrians. Miraillet summed up by noting France's relations with Syria are improving slightly but that Paris is proceeding with great caution.

PIRACY

18. (C) Miraillet noted the EU is very close to an agreement in which the UK would head its first ESDP mission, a maritime counter-piracy mission off the Horn of Africa. He expressed his satisfaction at British willingness to lead this mission, which he said is likely directed by Gordon Brown's office. The headquarters structure remains to be decided, and some member-states have potential legal problems prosecuting any pirates they might apprehend, but the mission will likely be formalized at the November GAERC. Edelman and Miraillet agreed that discussions at NATO are going well and that cooperation is taking shape.

IRAN

¶9. (C) Edelman, Errera and Miraillet concurred that financial pressure on the Iranians seems to be bearing fruit. Miraillet noted that the financial crisis, and lowered oil prices, also seems to be having a good impact. He said the international community can't expect anything more from the UN Security Council on Iran, due to Russia's public ambivalence. Miraillet offered to send the French Ambassador in Tehran to Washington if consultations would be useful. He noted that some in the West are tuning out the Iran issue due to "fatigue" since the issue has been under discussion for some time, despite the increasing urgency as the timeline to an Iranian nuclear capability grows ever-shorter. Miraillet said that Gulf states in particular are becoming increasingly nervous about Iran.

FUTURE EXCHANGES

¶10. (C) Miraillet said that Defense Minister Morin will invite Secretary Gates to France sometime before January. USDP and Miraillet agreed to pursue "two plus two" bilateral consultations that in principle would involve political director-equivalents from both the MOD and MFA (DOD and State), meeting formally twice a year to help the new administration continue with frequent, fruitful exchanges. The next meeting will take place in Washington in the November 17 timeframe, with Miraillet attending for the MOD and either Jacques Audibert (A/S-equivalent for Strategic Affairs) or Gerard Araud (Political Director) attending for the MFA. Edelman agreed to reach out to other U.S. officials such as U/S Burns, U/S Rood, A/S Fried and A/S Boucher to feed into the discussions.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by U/S Edelman.

STAPLETON